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ABSTRACT

The arts should be considered part of the basic content of any school curriculum. The arts teach us about the central nature of what it means to be human. They are an essential part of the curriculum for all learners across all ranges of abilities and talents in all schools, but perhaps especially in rural schools, where access to museums, the symphony, or ballet may be more restricted than in urban areas, and music and art specialists may not be a part of the school staff. The arts--music, poetry, visual imagery--can be powerful tools for enabling learning, and many theories attempt to explain how music and visual symbols help us "fix" information in our minds. The arts can be used very successfully to create the anticipatory set that prepares the learner at the emotional/feeling level for the cognitive content. Beyond the content they carry and the culture they provide, the arts serve as a tool for learning how to learn. The arts can also be integrated into the curriculum by using artistic expression as a means of demonstrating conceptual understanding of a body of knowledge. Finally, students' creation of art forms can make learning a joyful process. (JHZ)

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# LIVING, LEARNING AND THE ARTS INTEGRATING ARTS INTO THE CURRICULUM IN RURAL SCHOOLS

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# LIVING, LEARNING AND THE ARTS
# INTEGRATING ARTS INTO THE CURRICULUM IN RURAL SCHOOLS

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As I thought about the title of this presentation and the remarks I might make, I was profoundly struck by the small, yet not insignificant word "AND" in the title of this session. Living, learning AND the arts. "And" is a joining word, a conjunction; a word which brings things together. "And" in this context conveys a powerful message. Living, learning and the arts belong together.

In another sense, however, the presence of the word "and" conveys a second powerful message. Living, learning and the arts. And is a joining word. A word that is used when things are separate in nature and need to be linked. We have in our schools, our curriculum, our classrooms, separated learning from our lives, separated learning from the arts - from the creative act. This separation creates difficulties for all the learners in our classrooms in both urban and rural settings.

We have, by the nature of our schools and curriculum, placed the emphasis heavily on product almost to the exclusion of process. We have erected barriers between the content areas. In creating these artificial boundries, we have ourselves begun to believe that learning happens in cellular components. Reading

happens only between 9 and 9:45. History is taught only during 4th period.

This separation occurs in urban schools and in rural schools. It happens each time we as teachers neglect to help our students see the connections between the things they study. The arts are both process and product. The arts insist on crossing boundries, and are particularly useful in helping both teachers and students see these connections. carved out of time to explore some of the ways this can happen. I would like to share with you six ways that the arts and learning belong together.

ART AS CONTENT

Art could be included as part of the required content in the schools. The recent "back to basics" movement in schools has been appropriate in focusing attention on the building block skills students need to survive in their day to day lives. The schools, however, as most recent critics have indicated, misdefined what is basic. The "basics" include more than learning the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic. If we are to help our children live any more than mundane, "day to day" lives, we need also to include the arts as part of the basic curriculum. When Dr. Maurice Freehill wrote about gifted children being "birth rich and culture poor", he was describing a culture and its schools which present the bright child with poverty of thought and ideas. As Judith Crist said:

> "In this era of affuluence and of permissiveness we have in all but cultural areas, bred a nation of overprivileged youngsters, saturated with vitamins, television and plastic toys. But they are nurtured from infancy on a Dick and Jane literary and artistic level; and the cultural drought ...sets in when they are between six and eight."

The study of great artists, writers and musicians will broaden the understanding our children have of the richness of their heritage. The advent of television has brought about a homogenization of the culture. Our children participate for hours each day in language and imagry that is narrow and constrained.

The culture of television, AM radio and rock video is shallow and rigid tapping only a small part of the richness of images and sounds available. It is ironic that as our world becomes more complex and more difficult to understand, the media encourages, reinforces, creates a simplistic, one dimensional view of the world. Life in the sit-coms and police shows is black and white with simple solutions and packaged in neat half hour segments. Real life is neither simple nor neat.

Part of our work as educators is to expose our students to alternatives. To expose them to the richness and complexity of the English language; to expose them to the range and variety of rhythms and styles of musical expression; to innoculate them with an alternative visual imagery of their own and other cultures.

The introduction of art as content does not require a special arts instructor, only an attitude of those within the school that exposure to the arts is important. This attitude shift is essential in rural schools where there rarely are specialist in music, art, theatre, dance and where the exposure of children to these arts outside the classroom may also be limited.

Spend a month with Mozart. Bring Mary Cassat to visit your

classroom. Invite Salvador Dali, Rembrandt and Emily Dickenson to discuss their works with the children. Read the stories and plays of Bronte, Alice Walker, Dickens, Eliot and Shakespeare.

Many teachers are using excellent models for integration of literature into the curriculum using self designed or published literature based language arts programs. Homer's Odyssey is used to start children on a journey into the study of Greek literature, myth, art and history. The great books teach more than reading. They teach essential lessons about life. Reading is not just an exercise in memorizing words, but a way to bring ideas to light. The visual and musical arts are not just entertainment, but a means for introducing some of the complexity with which our culture resounds. The wider the range of styles, thoughts, forms to which we expose our students, the greater their capacity to appreciate, create, understand. As Nancy Astor said:

> "Education should educate us out of self into something far finer. into a selflessness which links us with all humanity."

An innoculation of the greater range of options may help our students develop the flexibility of thought they will need to survive in a world where the patterns and connections between things are increasingly complex. The arts of all sorts should be considered part of the basic content in any school curriculum. This step is especially important in the rural schools where access to museums, the symphony or ballet may be more restricted than in the larger population areas and music and art specialists

may not be a part of the school staff.

## ART AS A VEHICLE FOR CONTENT

The "arts", that is music, poetry, rhyme, visual imagery, can also be a powerful tool for enabling learning. I want you all to sing a song with me that was probably one of the most powerful learning tools of your life. You all used this song to fix permanently one of the building blocks of the language you now easily manipulate on the printed page. As you sing this song, I want you also to remember that Mozart used this same simple melody for a series of increasingly complex variations.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Now I know my ABCs. Next time won't you sing with me.

There are many theories about how music and visual symbols help us "fix" information in our minds. Right/left brain theorists speak of the power of a technique which uses both the language/verbal and symbolic/music portions of the brain. Those who specialize in memory talk about the use of patterns or structures which help us organize seemingly random information into something more easily remembered. Regardless of the reasons - the technique works. Attaching information to be learned to a musical, or visual pattern can help children remember sequences or content in an enjoyable way. Learning can be reinforced and more easily recalled through the arts.

Connie Kaldor, a Canadian musician, has written song which is a good example of a "teaching" song. The song presents the life cycle of a plant and could be used as part of a unit on plants and how they grow.

If you've got the sun and if you've got the rain
Plant a little seed in the old back lane.
You wish and you pray and you keep the weeds down
And you might find, you might find
A root growing out from the seed in the ground.

...

A shoot growing out from the root from the seed...
A stem...
A flower...
A seed growing out from the flower from the stem
From the shoot from the root from the seed
Ir the ground.

The art form is the vehicle for carrying the content to be remembered.

The arts can also help teachers integrate another type of content into the classroom. Teachers are often called upon to help children deal with the emotional issues in their lives. Songs, poems, stories can help initiate discussion in classrooms about topics which are hard to discuss.

Tattling, for example. Elementary teachers, in particular, have to help children learn appropriate and inappropriate times to "tell" and deal with the anger they feel when another child does something they don't like. Rosalie Sorrels wrote a song which both teachers and children enjoy. A song which helps children begin the discussion of this difficult topic.

I'm Gonna Tell

I'm gonna tell, yes I'm gonna tell
I'm gonna holler and I'm gonna yell
I'll get you in trouble for everything you do.
I'm gonna tell on you.

I'm gonna tell that you punched me and you kicked me
I'm gonna tell that you scratched me and you bit me.
But I won;t tell mama what I did to you
No, I'm gonna tell on you

I'm gonna tell where you hid the broom
So you wouldn't have to clean up your room
Then mama will sweep up the floor with you

Yes, I'm gonna tell on you

I'm gonna tell that you broke that plate
And I'll tell mama 'bout those bananas you ate
Soon she'll find out about the cat and the glue
I'm gonna tell on you

Child and adult alike understand the self-righteousness and the longing for revenge implicit in this song. The singing about them makes them easier to discuss.

There are also songs, stories, plays, poems, pictures about other issues central to the emotional/social learning of our students. The arts can make these issues of death, divorce, separation, fear, self-image more accessible to students. The arts can help our gifted students explore and discuss their feelings and fears of being different and develop a more positive self image in recognition that others have had similar problems.

ART AS ANTICIPATORY SET

Those who write and study effective learning have explored the importance of anticipatory set in the learning process. Anticipatory set is the "getting ready to learn", setting the tone for what is coming. Anticipatory set is also often preparing the learner in the emotional/feeling level for the cognitive content. The arts can be used very successfully to set the stage for learning.

The social studies teacher introducing a unit on the settlers of the midwestern states of our country might spend sometime talking about the reasons people moved and the hardships they encountered. She might talk about the loneliness of the prairies for those who moved west, or she might read a poem or sing or play a song like Tom Hunter's Followed by the Wind to set

the emotional tone.

Followed by the Wind

Blowing down the valleys and out across the plains
There's a wind that makes the grasses lean
And bends the falling rain
Blows the clouds, the golden fields
And gives the seeds their wings
And everywhere you go,
You know, you're followed by the wind

Fills your mouth with dirt and grit
And makes the night hawks soar
Whistles round an old homestead
And bangs a rotten door.
The house is long abandoned there
Where once a farm had been
The folks who came went broke
And fled, followed by the wind.

No, you can't catch the wind out here
And you can't fight the sky
I've seen the ones who thought they would
I've seen their spirit die
'Cause out here on the edge of things
Where loneliness begins
The day seems next to endless
When you're followed by the wind.

The homestead act of '62
Brought folks to find a home
The land was vast, the price was right
But they settled all alone.
Strung out and unprotected there
From solitude and wind
Some went mad, and when they left
They were followed by the wind.

Some winds fill the sky with storms
And some clear storms away
Some winds scream and others purr
Some bring the gentle rain
But out here it can blow for days
So you think it'll never end.
It helps to have some friends around
When you're followed by the wind.

If the teacher were introducing a unit on the civil war, a song like Steve Goodman's Spoon River could set an emotional tone

which could prepare students for a discussion of the human tragedies in any war or conflict. I want you to notice how the abbreviated images used by Goodman evoke broader and more complete feeling and pictures almost like a pebble thrown into a pool of water.

Spoon River

All of the riverboat gamblers are losing their shirts
All of the brave union soldier boys sleep in the dirt
Yet you know and I know there never was reason to hurt
For all of our lives were entwined to begin with
Here in Spoon River.

All of the calico dresses, the gingham and lace
Are up in the attic with grandfather's derringer case
There's words whispered down in the parlor - a shadowy face
The morning is heavy with one more beginning
Here in Spoon River.

Come to the dance, Debbie Perkins, I like you right well
The Union's preserved. If you listen, you'll hear all the bells
I pray there's a heaven, I know that I've seen most of hell
My rig is outside, Come and ride through the morning
Here in Spoon River.

In using art as the anticipatory set, it is not essential that all the images be accurate or complete; discussion that follows will help the student place the images in context. In fact, for the gifted child, the ambiguity of these images will probably stimulate more discussion and connection than might have happened with a more descriptive song or picture. When selecting art forms to set anticipatory tone, try to seek those that will evoke an emotional as well as a cognitive response. When the emotional set for learning has been prepared. The cognitive ground is more fertile, ready for planting. Select those songs, poems, pictures, films that in their ambiguity leave the student some room to discover and explore the connections. Nor is it

necessary to be a performer. There are records and tapes readily available with appropriate material.

## ART AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

Art and the art forms, therefore, have a function beyound the content they carry, beyond the culture they provide. Art is in its very nature, a tool to enhance the ability to use complex learning skills. As teachers of the gifted, we focus a great deal of our time and energy in developing ways to enhance thinking skills.

All great art is based on seeing connections and patterns in things that were always there, but not yet perceived. It is through the artist's eye that we are given a window into the "true" nature of the world. As the American educator and philosopher Susanne Langer said:

> "The secret of the fusion is the fact that the artist's eye sees in nature....an inexhaustible wealth of tension rhythms, continuites and contrasts which can be rendered in line and color; and those are the "internal forms" which the "external forms" - paintings, musical or poetic compositions or any other works of art express for us."

Art, it seems to me, should simplify. That, indeed, is very nearly the whole of the higher artistic process; finding what conventions of form and what details one can do without and yet perserve the spirit of the whole.

The arts give importance to the small details out of which we see the larger patterns. Part of the power of the song, the story, the photograph, the canvas is that we are led by the artist to discovery of the larger meaning through the exploration of a small part of the whole. Art is by its nature compressed

and incomplete.

The song about Spoon River, for example, conveys with the few simple concrete images a whole era and time. A feeling tone. "Calico dresses and grandfather's derringer case" connect with a miriad of other images in the mind of the listener. The song, the poem, the play, the photograph can resonate in more than one direction.

Sometimes it is the smallest and seemingly most insignificant of details which leads to some of the most profound of perceptions, exactly because the insight can be said indirectly. Tom Hunter, in talking about the process of writing songs with children discussed the connection between the detail and the places children took the detail.

> "A conversation with children about pockets started with the fun of making lists of where pockets are found and what's in them and ended with it not being fair that some are full and some are empty. A conversation about a turtle started with the phone number on his shell and the limp in his leg, and ended with honest comments about domestic violence."

The arts, in their use of detail have the same type of power that parable uses. They teach us, not by didactic method, but by allowing us to glimpse the whole out of the corner of our minds. The elegant thing about art is that you can say things that are too big to say. The arts can give our gifted students a language to communicate their own personal connections.

The arts are not the "icing" on the cake or the "butter" on the bread of the curriculum. The arts are an arena for practicing learning skills necessary to understand and use the other side of the curriculum. The arts are a process of refining our vision of what is true. The great scientist understands patterns

and uses them in structuring her field. The linear thinking of the scientific method is only one tool that the scientist uses to apprehend the not yet known. When Crick was pondering the essential nature of DNA - the building block of all life- it was the use of visual imagery that provided the key. He saw the double helix in the fire - a vision. and made the leap to his field of work. He made connections.

There is more commonality between the great poem and the deep theorem than we understand. Both the artist and the scientist are trying to talk about a "truth" in concise language and to allow us to see this truth in a new way. Science is only another form of mythmaking which moves us from the known closer to the unknown. The metaphoric language of physics is as rich as that of literature.

Jacob Bronowski, in Science and Human Values understood the essestial connection between art and learning. He said:

> "We remake nature by the act of discovery in the poem or in the theorem. And the great poem and the deep theorem are new to every reader, and yet are his own experience, because he himself recreates them."

It is interesting, yet not surprising, when reading the biographies of the great scientists or politicians to discover that many were also accomplished artists. Both Einstein and Schweizter were talented musicians. Galileo was a lutist. Elizabeth Sewell, the literary critic, had advanced degrees in both the sciences and humanities. Conversely, great artists are often well trained in the sciences as well. Leonardo da Vinci was a master of his artistic craft yet was also a great inventor. Gertrude Stein had advanced training in medicine. I can't help

but believe that their participaton in their art prepared and enhanced the skills and perceptions which enabled them to make those cognitive leaps and their training in the sciences may have made them clearer observers of their world. Art and technology are not as separate as we have made them. Einstein, when asked where his ideas came from, said they came from images.

Learning how to learn is as basic a part of the curriculum as any content. Our world is changing more rapidly than we can imagine. A biochemist, teaching beginning medical students, recently remarked to his class. "Half of what you are about to learn will not be true by the time you graduate. That does not bother me. What does bother me, is that I don't know which half." We as educators can no longer participate in the illusion that we can teach our children content that will serve them for their lives. We must, instead, use the content as the vehicle for teaching them how to discover and integrate the new knowledge. Our students live in a world that is certain because of its' unknowns.

Our children may not stay in their rural communities. They may leave to explore careers and lives in places and times for which we have no way to prepare them except by helping them learn to inquire, question, synthesize, hypothesize. Tomorrow's (or perhaps today's) illiterate will not be the person who can't read, but the person who has not learned how to learn.

ART AS PRODUCT

Another way to integrate the arts into the curriculum is to use artistic expression as a means of demonstrating conceptual

understanding of a body of knowledge. Art can be used as a product. Students in schools are often required to write reports or papers in which they rehash and paraphrase what they have learned in a unit of study. Mirra Komarovsky a noted educator and writer said:

> "The greatest danger of traditional education is that learning may remain purely verbal. Words are learned and placed in dead storage in one part of the mind while life is lived unilluminated and unguided by this learning. Such a danger is inherent in the very nature of education."

The use of verbal and written language skills are important, but they are not the only ones. In a sense requiring written reports to the exclusion of other forms of expression is like practicing only one stroke in a game of tennis. It doesn't really matter if your forehand stroke is good. If you don't also have practice in backhand and the serve, you can't participate fully in the whole game. In the class I teach at Western on educating the gifted and talents, I ask students to elect a project format in which their final product can be anything <u>but</u> a written report - a poem, a collage, a game, a slide presentation, a speech, a song. The only requirement is that the vehicle they choose demonstrate their own synthesis of some part of the content they have studied. Most students feel panic at the thought. Nowhere in their previous schooling have they been given practice in the production of anything but pages with words stapled together inside a cardboard cover. Once they face their fear of expression in other than a verbal form, they often find a creative power and excitement they didn't know they possessed.

Not only should we encourage practice in other areas of production for students, but we may also find pupils whose

conceptual understanding is better than we knew. Not all gifted students are facile in written or spoken language. Their skill in writing and language production may impede their ability to show us what they know. If we provide some alternative routes we may find that learning has happened. The design of a new cover for a book can be an effective device for demonstrating an understanding of the main idea or theme of the story. There are many appropriate routes to the same destination.

Additionally, the act of "creating" leaves the path open for new discoveries. As all of you who work with gifted children know, A curriculum which includes discovery as well as digestion, may, however, be threatening to the teacher. The joy and the secret terror for the teacher is that the student may make connections that we have not seen. It will not only be the student who changes, but ourselves as well. The arts can be a personal point of view and we may not be comfortable with the products our students develop.

Allowing and encouraging other forms of production in addition to verbal ones may also allow some kinds of understandings which are better perceived through alternate kinds of imagery. Some contents and feelings may be better apprehended non-verbally.

ART AS PLAY

The infusion of the arts into the curriculum can have the side benefit of making learning fun. Students often have the misperception that in math class you work--in art class you play. Learning is not supposed to be fun; if you're having a good time

you're not learning. Yet the best of the learning situations are playful, full of joy and fun. Music, poetry, visual imagery and the student's participation and creation of these forms can make learning a joyful process.

In addition, the act of creation itself is the learning act. Learning is a process, a journey, not a destination. We are a nation hooked on products. We have institutionalized normative measures. We should become equally addicted to formative measures and the recognition that the process is as important. And that the process of learning is fun.

SUMMARY

The title of this talk should not be living, learning and the arts but living, learning as an art. The arts teach us about the central nature of what it means to be human. They are an essential part of the curriculum for all learners across all ranges of abilities and talents, in urban and rural schools, for I am convinced that we must train not only the head, but the heart and hand as well. We must begin to apprehend the patterns in words, numbers, language, history and our own lives. We must begin to understand that everything we do matters. Each word we choose to say or write has a life of its own. Each number changed in an equation alters the balance of things. Ernest Boyer, wrote eloquently about these connections.

> "The arts not only give expression to the profound urgings of the human spirit. They also validate our feelings in a world which deadens feelings. Now, more than ever, all people need to see clearly, hear acutely, and feel sensitively through the arts. These skills are no longer just desireable. They are essential if we are to survive together with civility and joy."

We are all part of a deeply rich dance that is life. Learning is the basic step of that dance. Learning itself is art. The most profound of all the arts.

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